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BOOK NOTICES.

Through Hidden Shensi. By Francis H. Nichols. Illustrated from photographs taken by and for the Author. Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1902.

Mr. Nichols says in his Preface:

I had all the prejudices of the foreigner when I first crossed the gray plain and met the old race . . . ; but as I went in and out among them they began to interest me. I found that they had achieved much, but were free from boasting; that they loved their own kind of learning; . . . that they strove to do right as they saw the right . . . This narrative offers no solutions of Chinese problems, points no morals, and draws no conclusions.

The book is an attempt at a picture of Oldest China and its people as they appeared to a fair-minded, keen-sighted observer, who has the gift of making his readers agree with him.

Shensi is a province of northwestern China, with an area of about 80,000 square miles, and a population of not far from nine millions, of a race held to be among the finest in the empire.

It was the seat of the Mohammedan revolt of 1868-1873, and Mr. Nichols was told in Peking that his life would not be safe among a people so hostile to foreigners.

He travelled with passports from Prince Ching, and met with no difficulty, though his visit was during the time of the Boxer trouble. Throughout his journey, from Peking to the west and in the province of Shensi, he found the people kindly and courteous, as became the heirs of an ancient civilization. This urbanity and the deeply-sunken roads are the visible signs of antiquity in a land almost destitute of monuments, as compared with other countries.

Like all those who have become acquainted with the Chinese at home, Mr. Nichols was charmed with their family life. He says:

Ride into any Shensi village about sunset on a summer evening and you will see a father and mother in front of their mud house, with their four or five little boys and girls about them, playing, romping, and all laughing and happy together.

These children were strong and healthy, with ruddy complexions and bright eyes, and with a natural, trusting manner towards strangers. There comes a change for the girls, however, at the age of eight, when the foot-binding begins, universal in Shensi.

On his way through Shansi (the province east of Shensi) Mr. Nichols saw on every side the ruin and degradation caused by the opium habit, and he declares that he has never met with a

Chinaman who did not regard it as a curse to the nation. The highest form of recommendation bestowed upon a man in the interior of China was invariably: *He has never smoked opium.*

The account of Sian (Si-ngan-fu) and the Sianese has a peculiar interest. This capital of Shensi is one of the oldest cities on earth and very much the same to-day as it was in the beginning. Its streets are wide, and intersect each other at right angles, and the principal ones are paved with stone blocks. Sian is famous for its banks, which have correspondents all over the empire; yet the city has no post-office. Letters are sent by messengers.

Mr. Nichols made his visit just after Shensi was recovering from one of the worst famines of the century; but there was no street that corresponded in any way to what we should term a *poor quarter*, no gambling-house or public gaming, no liquor saloon, no *dive*. Mr. Nichols affirms that places of this character are only to be found in China in foreign concessions, in treaty ports; and he quotes the remark of a Mohammedan tea-merchant that he

should rather like to see the Christians overthrow the idols and convert China to the worship of the One God, but the only trouble is if Sian were a Christian city it would be as bad as Shanghai.

Mohammedans of whatever race have a way of making the Nazarene uncomfortable by odious comparisons.

The famous Nestorian Tablet is still to be seen in a neglected field about a mile beyond the western gate of Sian, in the midst of ruins near a small Taoist temple. Three tablets are mounted side by side on stone tortoises, the Nestorian, distinguished by a small Greek cross near the top, standing between the other two. Mr. Nichols obtained a rubbing of the inscription and an impression of a small inscription on the side of the tablet, previously overlooked. This shorter inscription is translated as follows by Dr. Martin:

In the reign of Hien Fung, 1079 years after the erection of this monument, it was visited by Han Tai Hua, of Wulin, who caused the pavilion to be rebuilt. I grieve that my deceased friend, Governor Woo, could not be with me on this occasion. The pathos of the original seems to have escaped in the translation.

From the ancient city Mr. Nichols and his friend Mr. Duncan started for a week's journey through the Tsin-ling mountains to Lung-chü-chai, where they were to embark on the Han-Kiang river for Hankow, on their way to Shanghai. The Tsin-ling mountains are the watershed between the Hwang-ho on the north and the Yang-tse-Kiang on the south. They are treeless and lonely, the only birds being occasional flocks of crows. There are wolves, said to enter villages and attack caravans, and a few *jaguars*, though it does not appear how these made their way into China.

The boats on the Han-kiang are remarkably like American canoes, pointed at both ends, and with a sheer slope towards the centre of the bottom (there is no keel), which is about four inches in width. All the boats have water-tight compartments. The river is rarely deep enough to admit of steering, but a long pole with a board on the end serves for a rudder on occasion. The boatmen are very like American Indians, and all the traffic of Shensi with the Yang-tse-kiang is carried in their light canoes. With his arrival at Hankow Mr. Nichols closes his most entertaining and instructive volume.

The illustrations, mostly taken by the author, are many and excellent.

A Pronouncing Gazetteer and Geographical Dictionary of the Philippine Islands, United States of America, with Maps, Charts, and Illustrations. Also the Law of Civil Government in the Philippine Islands, passed by Congress and approved by the President July 1, 1902, with a Complete Index. Prepared in the Bureau of Insular Affairs, War Department, 1902. (September 30, 1902.) Washington, Government Printing Office, 1902.

This Gazetteer is a compendium of information, gathered from all available sources, concerning the Philippine Islands, their geography, physical features, commerce, resources, population, etc., followed by an alphabetically-arranged list of islands, provinces, towns, lakes, mountains, light-houses, etc., etc., to the number of 10,300, with maps, charts, and illustrations.

The volume contains 933 closely and handsomely printed pages, admirably arranged and condensed, and it does the greatest credit to the resources of the War Department.

Without taking part in the discussion of a reform in the spelling of Filipino names, the Gazetteer wisely retains the old Spanish orthography, not only because Government publications follow that system, but with the view of avoiding further confusion on the subject.

The test of a geographical dictionary is its use, and that is an affair of time, which may be trusted to establish the authority of this book.